

Model terms of reference for Ethos Committee in church schools



The DBE encourages all church school governing bodies – particularly those considering or in federations – to support an Ethos Committee, whose primary function will be to support the school in maintaining and developing its Christian ethos, in accordance with its mission statement. In applying the principles below, schools are encouraged to take into consideration their local context.

The school's mission statement may be based on the following model developed by the Church of England and the Church in Wales:

'Recognising its historic foundation, the school/federation/academy will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at Parish and Diocesan level.'

The school/federation/academy aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of religious belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.'

The Ethos committee will promote the key features of church school distinctiveness as outlined by Dearing (*The Way Ahead 2001*)

- The Headteacher committed to the Christian character of the school
- Collective Worship with distinctive Christian elements every day
- Excellence in Religious Education and that it commands at least 5% of curriculum time
- Observance of Christian festivals and the seasons of the Church year
- Active and affirming relationships with local churches
- Proclamation of the school as a church school

The Ethos committee will also take account of the recommendations of the Chadwick Review (*The Church School of the Future 2012*) with regard to church schools

- The recruitment of Christian teachers and headteachers
- Strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning in religious education, particularly the teaching of Christianity (see Religious Education Statement of Entitlement, National Society 2012)
- The development of a Church school curriculum that includes implications for pedagogy, curriculum content and school organisation
- Attention to a study being carried out to establish 'well-being' indicators
- Embedding and expressing distinctively Christian values

Terms of Reference

1. To ensure that all school leaders contribute to sustaining, developing and nurturing the school's Christian ethos.
2. To ensure that the Religious Education and Collective Worship policies contribute to an institution in which the Christian faith is manifested through every aspect of school life.
3. To ensure the school develops a corporate life which attempts to glorify God in developing the full human potential of each person - whether pupil, member of staff, parent or governor.
4. To ensure that Christian principles are embedded in the policies and day to day life of the school.
5. To regularly monitor and review the school's self-evaluation as a Church school, ensuring that self-evaluation is ongoing, contributes to school improvement and ensures good preparation for a SIAMS inspection.

6. To ensure the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners.
7. To ensure that the importance of Religious Education is demonstrated in the school.
8. To ensure learning and teaching in Religious Education is effective and progress of pupils' learning is assessed.
9. To ensure Collective Worship inspires and enhances the spiritual development of pupils and staff, of all faiths or of none.
10. To ensure school leaders and governors focus on and use Christian values to promote a distinctive Christian vision for the school.
11. To ensure effective partnership between the school, the church and the wider community, including parents.

Membership

To include – the Incumbent (or nominee), a Foundation Governor, a Parent Governor, a member of the Senior Management Team. The committee may invite Associate Members to join meetings where the agenda is relevant to their interest e.g. representative(s) from additional parishes within the benefice/catchment area; subject co-ordinators. The committee is also encouraged to consider how pupils' views may best be heard, possibly through a Church School Council.

Meetings

The committee will have the same procedural arrangements for the scheduling of meetings and circulation of agendas and papers as has the full Governing Body.

Agenda template:

- Apologies
- Minutes of the last meeting
- Policy review. Sent out before the meeting for comment
- Update on SIP from SMT
- Specific focus item (see 1-11 above)
- Date of next meeting – including focus subject

Reporting

The committee shall present a report on its activity to the full Governing Body Meeting each term, to include:

- a summary of the last meeting's minutes
- a monitoring report on the progress of the post-SIAMS action plan.

Monitoring strategies

- Pupil perception and School Council interviews
- Questionnaires
- Attending Collective Worship
- Staff interviews
- Joint lesson observations with SMT member
- Reviews of documentation - newsletter, websites, correspondence
- Request reports from staff in relation to their areas of responsibility

Review arrangements

The terms of reference and membership of the committee will be reviewed annually by the full Governing body at its first meeting of the school year.